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TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE AND TECHNOLOGICAL LANGUAGE[1]

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ABSTRACT: Heidegger reflects on technology, language, and tradition, and he guides us into rethinking the common conceptions of technology and language. He argues that the anthropological-instrumental conception of modern technology is correct but not true, as it does not capture what is most peculiar to technology: the demand to challenge nature. The common conception of language as a mere means for exchange and understanding, on the other hand, is taken to its extremes in the technological interpretation of language as information. Heidegger also argues that the technological transformation of language represents an attack on what is peculiar to language as saying, i.e., as letting-appear. Such attack constitutes a threat to our very essence. The traditional or non-technologized everyday language, however, preserves what is original and contains new possibilities. The opposition between traditional language and technological language thus concerns our essence, our world-relation and world-living.

PRELIMINARY COMMENT

The circumstances underlying our theme are so multiform that only a few points can be discussed in the lecture. It shall serve, moreover, only as an occasion for discussion. This, in turn, shall not instruct but rather teach, i.e., let learn. Teaching is more difficult than learning. The true teacher is ahead of the students only in that he has more to learn than they; namely,

the letting-learn. (To learn: To bring what we do and do not do into the correspondence [*die Entsprechung*] with that which in each case grants [*zuspricht*] itself to us in what is essential to it.[2])

The title of the lecture "Traditional Language and Technological Language" may be disconcerting. It shall also be so to suggest that the names found there—language, technology, tradition—name that for which an adequate determination is lacking. Adequate whereto? To there where in our thinking-through the mentioned concepts we experience what *is* today, what concerns, threatens and oppresses our Dasein. This experience is necessary. For if we blindly set ourselves before what *is*, and if we remain fixed on the grasp of current conceptions of technology and of language, then we deprive the school—its task and work—of the determining power that is in store for it, or curtail such power.

'School'—this means the whole school system from the *Volksschule* to the university. The latter is presumably the most ossified school, straggling behind in its structure. Its name 'University' trudges along only as an apparent title. Correspondingly, the name 'Vocational School' also lags behind with regard to the goal of its work in the industrial age. It can be doubted whether the talk about the professional training school, about general education, about education as a whole, still meets the circumstances that are formed by the technological age. One could object: What really matters in a name? It depends on the thing. Of course. Yet how, if there were to be no thing for us and no adequate relation to it without its corresponding language, and the other way round: no genuine language without the right relation to the thing? Even there where we come into the presence of the inexpressible this occurs only insofar as the meaningfulness of speech brings us to the limits of language. Also this limit is still something linguistic and conceals in itself the relation between word and thing.

Thus, it does not remain a matter of indifference what the names 'technology,' 'language,' 'tradition,' say to us, how we hear them, whether in themselves they grant us what is today, i.e., what meets us tomorrow and what already concerned us yesterday. For this reason we could risk giving a pointer for reflection. In how far is this a risk? In so far as reflection [*Besinnung*] means: to awaken the sense [*Sinn*][3] for the useless. In a world for which only the immediately useful counts, which strives only for the increase of needs and consumption, a reference to the useless can only speak in an emptiness. A distinguished American sociologist, David Riesmann, *The Lonely Crowd*,[4] states that to secure its existence in the modern industrial society the consumption potential must take precedence over the raw-material-management-and-labor potential. The needs are determined according to what is held to be immediately useful. What is the meaning of the supremacy of the useful over

the useless? To be useless in such a way that they let nothing make them immediately practical is the sense of things. Hence, that reflection [*Besinnung*] in which it is pondered after [*nachsinnt*][5] yields definitely no practical use, yet the sense of things is that which is most necessary. For without this sense the useful remains senseless and thus not at all useful. Instead of discussing and answering this question for itself, we will listen to a text from the writings of an ancient Chinese thinker Dschuang-Dsï[6] one of Lao-Tse's students:

The Useless Tree

Hui-Dsï spoke to Dschuang-Dsï and said: 'I have a large tree. People call it the tree of heaven. It has such a gnarled and deformed trunk that one cannot saw it up by aligning it to a plumb-line. Its branches are so crooked and twisted that one cannot shape them into circles and squares. There it stands in the way, but no carpenter looks at it. So are your words, o sir, large and unusable, and everyone unanimously turns away from you.'

Dschuang-Dsï spoke: 'Have you never seen a marten whose hidden body lurks and waits if something passes by? It leaps here and there over the beams and does not shy away from high jumps until it falls or perishes caught in a trap. Now there is also the yak. It is big like a thundercloud; it stands there mightily. Yet, it cannot capture mice easily. Now, you have such a big tree and you are sorry that it is not useful for anything. Why don't you plant it in a deserted moor or in a wide empty field? There you could idly roam close by it and sleep underneath its branches during your moments of leisure. Neither hatchet nor ax has a premature end ready for it and no one can harm it. That something has no use: what does one need to worry about!'

Two similar passages, with some modifications, are found in other parts of the writing *The True Book on the Southern Land of Blossoms.* They provide the insight: One need not worry about the useless. By virtue of its uselessness the inviolable and everlasting suit it. Thus, it is wrong to apply the standard of usefulness to the useless. The useless has its own greatness and determining power since it does not let anything be made out of it. In this manner, useless is the sense of things.

If thus we venture forth a reflection on the things and circumstances named with the terms 'technology,' 'language,' 'tradition,' then such attempt yields immediately nothing for those considerations which will take place in this pedagogical course for practical instruction. In this sense, it could open up a horizon for the insight into the useless, which constantly and universally determines all pedagogical-practical considerations, even then when we are not expressly paying attention.

The presently wagered attempt to reflect on what 'technology,' 'language,' and 'tradition' are in themselves and in their connection at first looks like an exact determination of the corresponding concepts. However, reflection demands more, namely, the rethinking [*das Umdenken*][7] of the current conceptions of the things named. This rethinking does not occur for the sake of a special "philosophy." It results from the effort in our thinking about and saying of such fundamental words as 'technology,' 'language,' and 'tradition' which correspond to what *is* today. A single lecture can indeed cover only a few points and perhaps discuss a suitable selection. The impending course of action is simple. In each case, we will first explain the current conceptions of technology, language, and tradition. We then ask in how far do these conceptions reach what *is* today. Finally, from these discussions we will acquire the insight into what the lecture's strange title says. It obviously names a certain opposition between two forms of language. We are impelled to ask what kind of opposition is it, in which realm does it reign, how does this concern our own Dasein?

Much of what will be said in what follows may sound familiar to you. However, in the field of meditation and of reflective questioning there is never something familiar. All that is apparently familiar soon turns into what is worthy of question, i.e., into what is worthy of thought.

TECHNOLOGY

This topic shall be dealt with in detail because technology—correctly understood—reigns throughout the whole realm of our reflection. When we talk about technology today, we mean the modern machine technology of the industrial age. Yet, in the meantime, also this characterization has already become inaccurate. For, within the modern industrial age, we identify a first and a second technological revolution. The first consists in the transition from manual technology and manufacture to engine technology. The second technological revolution is seen in the rise and irruption of the maximum possible "automation," whose characteristic is determined by the ruling and leading technology, cybernetics. What the term technology means here in general is not clear without further ado. Technology can mean: the totality of the extant machines and apparatuses, merely as objects that are available—or in operation. Technology can mean: the production of these objects, whose production is preceded by a project and calculation. Technology can also mean: the appertainment of what has been specified into one with the humans and the groups of humans who work in the construction, production, installation, service, and supervision of the whole system of machines and appliances. Yet, we do not experience what such broadly depicted technology really is with these pointers. However, the field we are talking about can be demarcated—at least approximately—if we now

attempt to capture today's standard conceptions of technology in a series of five theses.

The theses shall be enumerated first. The explanation of the same, however, will not follow the sequence, but rather will review them in their connection.

The current conception says:

(1) Modern technology is a means invented and produced by humans, i.e., an instrument for the realization of industrial ends, in the widest sense, which have been set by humans.

(2) As such instrument, modern technology is the practical application of modern natural science.

(3) The industrial technology which is grounded in modern science is a special province within the modern cultural fabric.

(4) Modern technology is the constant, gradually increased development of the old manual technology according to the possibilities offered by modern civilization.

(5) Characterized as such human instrument, modern technology requires that it be brought under human control, that humans manage it as their own product.

No one can contest the correctness of the stated theses on modern technology. For each of its expressions can be proved by facts. However, it is still questionable whether this correctness even reaches into what is most peculiar [*das Eigenste*][8] to modern technology, i.e., into what determines it in advance and completely. The sought-after peculiarity of modern technology must give to understand in how far, i.e., whether and how what has been said in the five theses appertains together.

To be sure, it is already patent to an attentive look into the stated theses that the current conceptions of modern technology coincide in one feature. It can be characterized in two mutually dependent moments:

Modern technology is viewed, like any earlier technology, as something human, invented, realized, developed, steered and secured by humans for humans. To confirm the anthropological character of modern technology, it suffices to indicate that it is grounded in modern science. We understand science as a human task and achievement. The Same [*Das Selbe*][9] holds in the broadened and comprehensive sense of culture, whose partial region is put into operation as technology. Culture, in turn, aims at the care, development and preservation of the humanness, the humanity, of the human being. Hence, here is where the much discussed question has its scope: Whether and if so in what sense does education in technology thus itself contribute

something in general to the formation of humankind or does it endanger and confuse this formation?

With the anthropological conception of technology the other moment is established at the same time. We name it the instrumental. The Latin verb *instruere* means: to heap on one another, to build, to order, to install properly. The *instrumentum* is the tool and implement, the aid and means of conveyance—means in general. Technology is seen as something with which humans handle what they have the intention of putting to use. The instrumental conception of technology lets us survey and judge the previous history of technology in an illuminating way, uniformly, in the whole of its development. Accordingly, one can claim with a certain right within the horizon of the anthropological-instrumental conception of technology that there is fundamentally no essential difference between a stone ax and the newest product of modern technology, the "Telstar."[10] Both are instruments, means produced for definite ends. That the stone ax is a primitive implement while the "Telstar" is a highly complex apparatus indeed denotes a considerable difference in degree, yet it changes nothing in their instrumental, i.e., technological character. The former, the stone ax, serves for splitting and hewing a few of the hard bodies that can be found in nature. The latter, the satellite, serves as a switch station for a direct transatlantic exchange of television programs. Nevertheless, anyone will hasten to point out that the considerable difference between both instruments can scarcely admit of further comparisons, unless one were satisfied that both coincide in having an entirely general and vacuously grasped instrumental character. However, one is thereby conceding that the character of being instrumental does not suffice for determining what is peculiar to modern technology and its products. In this sense, the anthropological-instrumental conception of technology remains so catchy and pervasive that one explains the undeniable difference between both instruments by appealing to the uncommon progress of modern technology. Yet the anthropological-instrumental conception of technology remains predominant not only because it firstly and patently imposes itself, but rather because it is correct within its perimeter. Moreover, this correctness is further confirmed and strengthened in that the anthropological conception determines not only the interpretation of technology, but rather penetrates into all fields as the standard way of thinking. All the less can one object anything immediate against the correctness of the anthropological-instrumental conception of technology. Even if this were the case the question concerning technology cannot be cleared up on this account. This is because the correct is not also already the true [*das Wahre*], i.e., that which shows us and safeguards [*verwahrt*][11] what is most peculiar to a thing.

Yet, how shall we reach what is most peculiar to modern technology? How can we rethink the current conception of modern technology? Evidently only in such a manner that we expressly bring into view the thing called technology, and indeed from out of what *is* today.

However, a rethinking of such a decisive conception defined in that manner must suffice for this, and it is to remain a supposition. Yet, even as a supposition it is still an imposition on the usual opinion.

To succeed with this plan in a suitable fashion a brief reflection on the word 'technology' is required first. It belongs to the presently prevalent way of thinking to consider as external and thus superficial a reflection on the word that names a thing—which meanwhile is no adequate ground for discarding such a reflection or abandoning it.

The word 'technology' is derived from the Greek τεχνικόν. This means that which belongs to τέχνη. This word means already in the early Greek the same as ἐπιστήμη—i.e., to be in command of something [*vorstehen*], to understand it [*verstehen*].[12] τέχνη means: to know one's way in something and definitely in the producing of something. However, it must be pointed out that gaining a genuine insight into τὴν τέχνη which is thought in the Greek manner as well as an appropriate understanding of the late and modern technology all depends on whether we consider the Greek word in its Greek sense and avoid the later and contemporary conceptions in the word. τέχνη to know one's way in producing. Knowing one's way is a kind of knowing, having-known and knowledge.[13] The character of knowing resides, according to the Greek experience, in the unlocking of, making manifest, what is present as something present.[14] In a similar fashion, producing or setting-hither [*Herstellen*], thought in the Greek manner, is not so much that which is manufactured, handled and operated, but rather that which our German word *herstellen* says literally: *her* [hither], namely, in the manifest, *stellen* [to set or to place] as something that, before, was not present as something present.

Said concisely and to the point: τέχνη is not a concept of making, but of knowledge. τέχνη and, with it, technology truly mean: that something was set in the manifest, the accessible and the available, and is brought to its position as something present. Insofar as the character of knowing now rules in technology, it offers from itself the possibility and asks that its own kind of knowledge be expressly developed as soon as a science corresponding to it unfolds and presents itself. This occurred and occurred only once in the course of the whole history of humankind within the history of the European west in its beginning, or better said, as the beginning of that epoch that we call modernity.

Therefore, we will consider now the function and character of modern science within modern technology in the attempt to bring what is peculiar to modern technology into view from what *is* today. The other phenomenon that springs to view next to the prominent role of science is the inexorability of the limitless reign of modern technology. Presumably, both phenomena are connected because they have the same origin.

According to the current anthropological-instrumental conception of modern technology this [origin] is thought to be the practical application of modern science. Nevertheless, there is an increase in the number of voices, from the physicists' side as well as on the technicians' side, which hold that a characterization

of modern technology as an applied science is inadequate. Instead of this, one now talks of a "mutual support" in the relationship between science and technology (Heisenberg). This is so especially since atomic physics has come to see itself placed in a position that compels it to issue perplexing statements, namely: that the technological apparatus used by the observer in an experiment codetermines in each case what can and cannot have access to the atom, i.e., to its appearances. However, this means nothing less than that technology is a codeterminant in knowing. It can only be so if, in what is most peculiar to it, it has something of a knowledge-character in itself. However, one does not think that far, but rather is satisfied with the assertion about the reciprocal relation between natural science and technology. One calls both a "pair of twins," with which nothing is said so long as their common origin is not considered. Indeed, with the reference to their common origin we come closer to the fact, but in a way that, now more than ever, it has become mysterious and thus worthy of question. A reciprocal relation between natural science and technology can only subsist if both are coordinated, if neither science is only the foundation of technology, nor technology is only the application of science. Red and green are alike insofar as they agree with one another regarding the Same, in that they are properly colors.

Now, what is that thing in which modern natural science and technology agree and is thus the Same? What is that which is peculiar to both? To bring this into view, at least approximately, we need to consider what is new in modern natural science. This is determined, more or less deliberately, by the leading question: How must nature be projected in advance as a region of objects so that natural processes are made calculable in advance? There is a twofold enclosed in this question. On the one hand, there is a decision concerning the character of the reality of nature. Max Planck, the founder of quantum physics, has expressed this decision in a short sentence: "Real is that which can be measured." Only what is calculable in advance counts as being. On the other hand, the leading question of natural science contains the fundamental statement of the priority of method, i.e., of the advance against *what* in every case is secured as a proven object in the advance against nature.[15] One characteristic of this priority lies in the fact that, in theoretical physics, the freedom of contradiction between sentences and the symmetry between the basic equations remain in advance as standards. This is challenged forth [*herausgefordert*][16] into answers according to definite respects, as it were, called to account, through the self-fulfilling mathematical project of nature in theoretical physics and through the experimental interrogation of nature in accordance with this project. Nature is set thereupon to show itself in a calculable objectivity (Kant).

Yet precisely this positing that challenges forth [*herausfordernde Stellen*] is at the same time the characteristic of modern technology. It places the unreasonable demand on nature that it supply energy. It is a question, in a literal sense, of *bei- und her-zustellen* [setting-(this)-nearby-and-setting-(this)-hither],[17]

of making this available. This positing which rules throughout modern technology develops into various, mutually dependent, phases and forms. The energy that is locked in nature is unlocked, what is disclosed is transformed, what is transformed is reinforced, what is reinforced is stored, what is stored is distributed. These ways, according to which nature is secured, are controlled. This controlling, in its turn, must secure itself further.

What has been said suggests the thought that modern natural science, its observant-descriptive positing of nature into a calculable objectivity, could be a variety of technology. Then, the current conception of the relation between natural science and technology must be reversed: It is not that natural science is the foundation of technology, but rather that modern technology is the main characteristic of modern natural science. Though the reversal comes closer to the matter, it does not reach to its core. Concerning the relation between modern natural science and modern technology, it is a question of thinking that what is most peculiar to both, their common origin, conceals itself in what we called the positing which challenges forth. Yet, what is this itself? Obviously, an activity of humans, the representing, producing advance of humans against nature.[18] Consequently, the anthropological conception of technology is not only confirmed in its correctness, but also substantiated by the interpretation of technology that has now been obtained. Or shall this conception become absolutely questionable because of what was just pointed out? We must postpone the answer until we have first considered the other feature of modern technology, that is, the *inexorability of its limitless reign.*

The warning, frequently expressed until now, that the course of technology must be mastered, that its ever stronger drives towards new possibilities of development must be brought under control, already attests all too clearly to the apprehension which is manifest here: that modern technology could speak forth a demand [*ein Anspruch sprechen*][19] the realization of which humans would be unable to bring to a halt or even survey and control as a whole. However, in the meantime—and this is what is most significant—this warning has grown increasingly silent; which in no way means that humans now have the course of technology securely in their hands. Rather, the silencing betrays the fact that humans see themselves banished into perplexity and helplessness in the face of technology's claim of power, i.e., in the necessity to simply affirm, explicitly or implicitly, the inexorability of the reign of technology. If one adheres completely to this affirmation of the unavoidability of the current instrumental conception of technology, then it means that one affirms the reign of a process that confines itself to the incessant provision of means without heeding any one positing of ends.

In the meantime the ends-means conception of technology has shown itself to fall short of what is most peculiar to technology. What is peculiar to technology resides in the fact that, in it, the demand speaks forth, the demand to challenge nature forth into placing it at our disposal and securing it as natural energy. This demand is more powerful than any human positing of

ends. Affirming it means nothing less than recognizing a mystery in the rule of what is today. It means: To correspond to [*entsprechen*] the demand [*Anspruch*] that is extended over humans, over their plans and activities. What is most peculiar to modern technology is no mere human amassed power.[20] Today's humans are themselves challenged forth by the demand to challenge nature forth into preparation [*Bereitstellung*]. Humans themselves are set up [*gestellt*]; they are thereby demanded to correspond to the aforementioned demand.

We come closer to the mystery of what *is* today in truth in the technologically determined world when we simply recognize the demand, which speaks forth to humans in what is peculiar to modern technology and which orders them to challenge nature forth in its energy, instead of making way for it by helplessly positing ends that are limited to the protection of humanity.

However—what does all of this have to do with language? In how far is it necessary to talk about the technological-language, i.e., about a language that is technologically determined by what is most peculiar to technology? What is language [*die Sprache*], which is precisely what in a special way remains exposed to technology's dictate [*Herrschaftsanspruch*]?

LANGUAGE

From ancient times on, there has been the doctrine that humans, in contradistinction with plants and animals, are the beings that have the faculty of speech. This sentence not only means that humans possess, along with other faculties, also that one which enables them to speak. The sentence wants to say: only language enables humans to be those living beings which they are as humans. As the one who speaks, the human being is: the human being. Yet, who or what is the human being? And was does it mean to speak? Merely mentioning both these questions is enough to let us know that a fathomless abundance of things worthy of question opens up here. However, more disturbing than this abundance is the fact that, from the beginning, it lacks a reliable guide that will let it develop along the above mentioned questions in a proper way. This is why we stand here in the same position regarding language as we did with technology, adhering at first to the current conceptions.

Speech is: (1) A faculty, an activity and achievement of humans. It is: (2) The operation of the instruments for communication and hearing.

Speech is: (3) The expression and communication of emotions accompanied by thoughts in the service of information.

Speech is: (4) A representing and portraying of the real and unreal.

Wilhelm von Humboldt then based these four characterizations of language, which in themselves are still ambiguous, on deeper grounds, and he defined

the whole essence of language in a more comprehensive fashion. It suffices to extract this single sentence from his observations on language:

> If in the soul the feeling truly arises that language is not merely a means of exchange for mutual understanding, but is a true *world* that the *spirit* must set between itself and *objects* through the inner labor of its power, then it [the soul] is thus on the true way towards finding ever more in it [namely, in language as world] and in placing ever more into it.[21]

Humboldt's sentence contains a positive and a negative statement. The positive one says: every language is a world view, namely that of the people who speak it. Language is the between-world between the human being's spirit and objects. Language is the expression of this between, between subject and object. Only in recent times has Wilhelm von Humboldt's decisive insight into the essence of language become effective within the science of language and literature. Refer to the investigations by Leo Weisgerber and his school as well as to the important book by the minister of culture, Gerhard Storz, *Language and Poetry.*[22]

The negative statement in Humboldt's sentence emphasizes: Language is not a mere means for exchange and understanding. Yet precisely this current conception of language undergoes not only a revival, but also a consolidation and a unilateral ascent to extremes with the reign of modern technology. This is reflected in the sentence: Language is information.

Now, one could believe the technological interpretation of language as a means for communicating and notifying to be self-evident insofar as technology is itself understood as a means and everything is conceived only according to this respect. However, considering what we have already discussed regarding what is peculiar to technology and to language, this explanation remains at the surface. Instead of this we must ask: In how far does what is peculiar to modern technology, which challenges humans forth, i.e., sets them up, into making natural energy available and securing it, come into effect also and precisely in the transformation of language into mere information? In how far does there lie in the essence of language itself the vulnerability and the possibility for its transformation into technological language, i.e., into information?

To answer these questions, if only roughly, two things are necessary: First, we require the adequate definition of what is peculiar to language, i.e., of that which is properly the speaking of humans. On the other hand, we must adequately circumscribe what information means in a strictly technological sense.

Although Wilhelm von Humboldt's interpretation of language as world view yielded a productive knowledge, it leaves indefinite what is that which is proper to language, speaking itself. For reasons whose discussion must be passed over here, Wilhelm von Humboldt keeps to the characterization of language as expression, namely of an inner, i.e., of the mind, through an outer—communication and writing.

However, speaking is properly saying. Everyone speaks incessantly and their speaking still says nothing. On the other hand, becoming silent can say much. Yet, what does '*sagen*' [to say] mean? We experience it when we pay attention to what language itself gives us to think with this word. '*Sagan*' means to show. And what does it mean to show? It means: to let something be seen and heard, to bring something into appearance. What remains unsaid is what has not yet been shown, has not yet come into appearance. However, what is present [*Anwesendes*] comes into appearance through saying, that and how it presences [*anwest*]; what is absent [*das Abwesende*] as such also comes into appearance in saying. Yet, to say properly, i.e., to show, i.e., to let appear, is something humans can only do with what shows itself to them, which appears from itself, manifests itself and grants itself.[23]

However, saying as showing can also be represented and realized so that showing only means making signs. A sign then becomes the announcement of and report about something that does not show itself. A ringing tone, a flashing light, taken for themselves, are not signs. They are first produced and set up as such when it is agreed in advance, i.e., when it is said, what they shall mean in every case. Let us consider the Morse code signs, whose number and arrangement are limited to dots and dashes, and are thus subordinated to the phonetic patterns of speech sounds. A single sign can have only one of two forms: dot or dash. Here the recovery of the sequence of signs is executed on the basis of yes-no decisions for which production machines are set up, whose flows and breaks in electrical current carry out the schema of abstract signal transmissions and yield the corresponding message. For such a kind of report to be possible each sign must be clearly defined. In the meantime, each of its combinations must clearly mean a definite statement. The sole character of language remaining in information is the abstract form of writing that is transcribed into the formulae of a logic calculus. The clarity that is thereby necessarily required of the signs and formulae ensures the possibility of a secure and rapid communication.

The structure and performance of large-scale calculative planning rests on the technological-calculative principles of this transformation of language as saying into language as a mere report of signal transmissions. What is decisive for our reflection lies in the fact that it is from the technological possibilities of the machine that the instruction is set out as to how language can and shall still be language. The kind and character of language are determined according to the technological possibilities of the formal signal transmissions which execute a sequence of continual yes-no decisions with the highest possible speed. Which programs can be supplied to the computer, with which it, as one says, can be fed, conforms to the machine's structure and performance abilities. The kind of language is determined by the technology. Yet doesn't the reverse also hold: The machine's structure conforms to linguistic tasks, e.g., such as that of translation? But linguistic tasks are also in advance and fundamentally bound up with the machine, which requires

above all the clarity of signs and of sequences of signs. That is why a poem does not, on principle, let itself be programmed.

With the unconditional reign of modern technology there is an increase in the power—the demand as well as the performance—of the technological language that was devised for the widest possible spread of information. Because this [power] is scattered in systems of formalized reports and signals, the technological language is the severest and most menacing attack on what is peculiar to language: *saying* as showing and as the letting-appear of what is present and what is absent, of reality in the widest sense.

However, as long as the human being's relationship to those beings that surround and carry it, as well as to the being which it itself is, rests on the letting-appear, on the spoken and unspoken *saying*, the attack of the technological language on what is peculiar to language is at the same time the threat to the human being's ownmost essence.

If in the spirit of the reign of all-determining technology one holds information to be the highest form of language because of its clarity, and the security and speed in the exchange of reports and assignments, then the result of this is also the corresponding conception of the human's being and of human life. Thus, we read with Norbert Wiener, one of the founders of cybernetics, i.e., the most widely extended discipline of modern technology: "To see the whole world and to give commands to the whole world is almost the same thing as to be everywhere."[24] And in another place: "To live effectively means to live with adequate information."[25]

Within the horizon of the conception of language and of the human being in information theory, then also an activity like learning is interpreted technologically. Thus Norbert Wiener writes: "Learning is in its essence a form of feedback, in which the pattern of behavior is modified by past experience."[26] "Feedback . . . is a very general characteristic of forms of behavior."[27] "[F]eedback is the control of a system by reinserting into the system the results of its performance."[28]

A machine carries out the technological process of feedback, which is marked by a regulator circuit, just as well as the report system of human language—if not in a technologically superior way. That is why the last step, if not indeed the first, in all technological theories of language is to explain "that language is not an exclusive attribute of man, but is one he may share to a certain degree with the machines he has constructed."[29] Such a sentence is possible under the presupposition that what is peculiar to language is reduced to, i.e., atrophied into, the mere transmission, the reporting, of signals.

In this sense, also the information theory of language necessarily runs up against a limit. For "any attempt to make a part of language clear (through its formalization into a sign system) already presupposes the use of natural language, also there where it is not clear" (Weizsäcker, "Language as Information"[30]). "Natural" language, i.e., the language that is not first invented

and arranged technologically, still survives, as it were, behind all technological transformation of the essence of language.

What is here called "natural" language—the non-technologized everyday language—is called traditional language in the title of the lecture. The handing down in tradition [*Überlieferung*] is not a mere passing on [*Weitergabe*],[31] it is the preservation [*Bewahrung*] of what is original, it is the safeguarding [*Verwahrung*] of the new possibilities of the already spoken language. The latter itself contains and grants the unspoken. The handing down in the tradition of a language is realized through the language itself, and indeed in such a way that, for this, it lays claim to the human being to say the world anew from the language that is preserved and thus to bring what is not-yet-seen into appearance. However, this is the poet's task.

The title of the lecture "Traditional Language and Technological Language" does not name only one opposition in it. Concealed behind the title there is a reference to a constantly growing danger that threatens the human being in the innermost of its essence—namely in its relation to the whole of what has *been*, what *is* arriving, and what *is* present. What at first looks as if it were only a difference between two kinds of language proves to be an occurrence which rules over humans, which concerns and unsettles nothing less than the human being's world-relation. It is a world-living whose impact can barely be noticed by today's humans because they are continually covered over with the newest information.

That is why it would have to be considered whether instruction in the mother tongue, in view of the forces in the industrial age, is not something altogether different from a merely somewhat general education as opposed to a professional training. It would have to be pondered whether this language instruction must be, instead of an education, rather a reflection, namely, on the danger that threatens language, and this means the human being's relation to language. However, this must be at the same time a reflection on the saving power that conceals itself in the mystery of language, insofar as it always brings us into the nearness of what is unspoken and what is inexpressible.

EDITOR'S EPILOGUE

This writing reproduces the hitherto unpublished handwritten text (located in the German Literature Archive in Marbach) of the lecture which Martin Heidegger delivered on July 18, 1962, in a lecture course for science teachers in the vocational school of the State Academy for the Continuing Education of Teachers at the Comburg (Schwäbisch Hall). The lecture took place under the suggestion and through the mediation of Martin Heidegger's son, Jörg Heidegger, then a graduate engineer teaching assistant at a vocational school. In the reproduction of the text the author's obvious oversights were silently corrected. Heidegger's peculiar writing style was retained.

The endnotes have been placed by the editor.[32]

I kindly thank the German Literature Archive in Marbach, especially Dr. Brigitte Schillbach, for their helpful support.

ENDNOTES

[1]Martin Heidegger, *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache.* Ed. Hermann Heidegger. Copyright 1989 by Erker-Verlag, Franz Larese und Jürg Jannett, Gallusstrasse 32, CH-9000 St. Gallen.

[2][Tr.: Note the relation between the verbal noun *die Entsprechung* (correspondence), or the related verb *entsprechen* (to correspond), and the verb *zusprechen* (to grant or award), their common root in the verb *sprechen* (to speak), and their relation to the noun *die Sprache* (language). The inseparable prefix *ent-* sometimes means the same as 'from or away,' so that the verb *entsprechen* could be taken in its most literal sense as 'to speak from or away.' Since the separable prefix *zu-* means 'to or towards' the verb *zusprechen* would suggest the literal translation 'to speak to.'

[3][Tr.: Note the close ties between the German nouns *Besinnung* (reflection) and *Sinn* (sense). The reflexive verb *sich besinnen* means 'to recollect,' 'to remember,' or 'to think on.' Hence, as William Lovitt has already pointed out, it is crucial to bear in mind that "for Heidegger *Besinnung* is a recollecting thinking-on that, as though scenting it out, follows after what is thought,' while the English word 'reflection,' with its roots in the Latin *reflectere* or 'to bend back' offers no such suggestion. "Science and Reflection" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 155, n. 1.]

[4]David Riesmann, in collaboration with Reuel Denney and Nathan Glazer. *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1950). Cf. p. 17. [Tr.: Heidegger quotes from David Riesmann, *Die einsame Masse. Rohwolts Deutsche Enzyklopädie* (Hamburg: 1958), No. 72/73, with an introduction by Helmut Schelsky. Cf. p. 13.]

[5][Tr.: While the German verb *nachsinnen* usually means simply 'to ponder,' 'to meditate' or 'to muse,' its separable prefix *nach-* often means 'to,' 'towards,' or 'after.' I have translated it here as 'to ponder after' in the attempt to follow more closely its connection to the meaning of *Besinnung* (reflection) as a thinking that follows after what is thought.]

[6]Dschuang-Dsï, *Das wahre Buch vom südlichen Blütenland.* Trans. Richard Wilhelm (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1923), p. 7. Cf. p. 33 ff.

[7][Tr.: The German verb *umdenken* means 'to rethink,' 'to change one's thinking,' 'to reorient oneself.' The separable prefix *um-* means the same as '(a)round,' 'circum- or re-' or 'trans-.' *Das Umdenken* (rethinking) thus suggests a change or transformation in our way of thinking.]

[8][Tr.: An alternative, perhaps more literal, translation of *das Eigenste* would be 'the ownmost,' in the sense of what is most proper to or belongs most intrinsically to something.]

[9][Tr.: *Das Selbe* (the Same) is a unique Heideggerean expression with its particular philosophical meaning. As William Lovitt explains, it "is a unity that—far from being abstract

and simple—is rather a *together* that involves a reciprocal relation of belonging." "The Word of Nietzsche" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 57, n. 6.

[10][Tr.: The "Telstar" is an active communications satellite of direct television between Europe and the U.S. that was launched on July 10, 1962.]

[11][Tr.: Note the close connections between the German noun *das Wahre* (the true) and the verb *verwahren* (to safeguard or to keep). It is also important to bear in mind that these words, and others such as *Bewahrung* (preservation) and *Verwahrung* (safeguarding), *Wahrheit* (truth) and *wahren* (to keep safe), share the common stem—*wahr*. Cf. "The Turning" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, pp. 42-3, n. 9.]

[12][Tr.: Both German verbs *vorstehen* (to be in command) and *verstehen* (to understand) share a common root in the verb *stehen* (to stand). Taken in their most literal sense, *vorstehen* would mean 'to stand before,' while *verstehen* could mean 'to stand thoroughly, to the end.']

[13]*Sichauskennen ist eine Art des Erkennens, Erkanntnhabens und Wissens.*

[14][Tr.: The English 'what is present as something present' translates here the German *was als Anwesendes vorliegt*. However, it fails to hint at the underlying nuances in both the noun *die Anwesende* and the verb *vorliegen*. The former is related to the verb *anwesen* (to presence) which is composed of the verb *wesen* (to continue or to endure) and the prefix *an-* (at, to, toward, unto). Moreover, the verb *wesen*, from which we have the noun *Wesen* (essence), means the same as 'to essence.' Hence, the underlying sense of *die Anwesende* is 'that which endures or essences toward.' This comment is based on William Lovitt's observations in "The Question Concerning Technology," pp. 3-4, n. 1 and, especially, p. 9, n. 7. As for *vorliegen*, the literal sense is that of *liegen* (to lie or to be situated) and *vor-* (ahead, before, in front). Hence, a full rendering of the underlying meaning of the phrase would be 'what lies ahead as that which endures or essences toward.']

[15][Tr.: There is a rich play of meanings in the original German text between the words *Vorrang* (priority), *Vorgehen* (advance or, literally, a going forward), *gegen* (against), *Gegenstand* (object or, literally, what stands over against), and *sicherstellen* (to secure or, literally, to set or place securely).]

[16][Tr.: Taken in its most literal sense, the verb *herausfordern* means 'to demand or to challenge out hither.' Cf. "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 14, n. 13.]

[17][Tr.: In its usual sense, the German verb *beistellen* means 'to provide or to place something at someone's disposal,' while *herstellen* means 'to produce.' By hyphenating these verbs, Heidegger is drawing our attention to the various connotations of the verb *stellen* (to set or to place) and the verbal form *Stellen* (positing).]

[18][Tr.: The English 'the representing, producing advance . . . against' translates the German *das vorstellende, herstellende Vorgehen . . . gegen*. However, the underlying play of meanings between the German words is not captured in the translation. Since *Vorgehen* (advance) is, literally, 'a going forward,' *vorstellen* 'to set forward,' and *herstellen* 'to set hither,' the sense is that of a 'going forward against which sets forward and hither.']

[19][Tr.: *Anspruch* means 'claim or demand.' Taken in its literal sense, the verb *ansprechen* (to address) means 'to speak to or towards.' My translation of the German *ein Anspruch sprechen* into the English 'to speak forth a demand' is an attempt to convey all these nuances as well as to anticipate Heidegger's connection of it with the 'challenging forth' (*herausfordern*) of nature.]

[20][Tr.: The English 'amassed power' is a highly tentative translation of a term which is presumably unique to Heidegger: *Gemächte*. It seems to be related to the German noun *Macht* and its plural *Mächte* 'power(s) or force(s),' while the prefix *Ge-* suggests a gathering or amassing of such power(s).]

[21]Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluß auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechtes* (Berlin: 1836). Facsimile of Dümmler's edition of 1836 (Bonn: Ferdinand Dümmlers Verlag, 1960), § 20, p. CCXXI. [Trans. George C. Buck and Frithjof A. Raven, *Linguistic Variability and Intellectual Development* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971), p. 135. Modified translation.]

[22]Gerhard Storz, *Sprache und Dichtung* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1957).

[23][Tr.: The verb *anwesen* (to presence) used in the previous sentence presumably already suggests this when taken in its literal sense, i.e., as 'to endure or to essence towards.' Cf. "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 9, n. 7.]

[24]Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings. Cybernetics and Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), p. 104. [Tr.: Heidegger quotes from Norbert Wiener, *Mensch und Menschmaschine* (Frankfurt am Main: Metzner Verlag, 1952), p. 95.]

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 124 [*Mensch und Menschmaschine*, p. 114].

[26]*Ibid.*, p. 69 [*Mensch und Menschmaschine*, p. 63].

[27]*Ibid.*

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 71 [*Mensch und Menschmaschine*, p. 65].

[29]*Ibid.*, p. 85 [*Mensch und Menschmaschine*, p. 78].

[30]Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, "Sprache als Information." In: *Die Sprache, Fünfte Folge des Jahrbuchs Gestalt und Gedanke* (München: Verlag R. Oldenbourg, 1959), p. 70.

[31][Tr.: In its literal sense, *Überlieferung* means 'handing down over or delivery,' while in its figurative sense it means 'tradition.' *Weitergabe*, on the other hand, means 'passing on or transmission.']

[32][Tr.: In this translation, the page references in notes 24-29 were extracted from the main text.]